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## SECTION I. EVOLUTION OF WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM IN NEW JERSEY

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This section of *the Guide for Implementing Urban Education Reform in Abbott Districts* does the following:

- Outlines significant events leading to Whole School Reform in New Jersey as a result of the *Abbott v. Burke* decisions;
- Describes Whole School Reform in New Jersey; and
- Describes the relationship between the *Abbott v. Burke* decisions and New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards.

### A. ESTABLISHING WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM (WSR) IN NEW JERSEY

The Legislature, in 1996, passed the *Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act* (CEIFA). Plaintiffs on behalf of the 28 Abbott districts challenged this new legislation as facially unconstitutional as applied to the Abbott districts. The New Jersey Supreme Court found CEIFA to be facially constitutional with regard to the adoption of substantive standards, referred to as Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), that served to define a thorough and efficient education (*Abbott IV*). However, the Court found CEIFA unconstitutional as applied to the Abbott districts because CEIFA's supplemental programs, Demonstrably Effective Program Aid (DEPA) and Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) were not based on a study of students' actual needs or the costs of meeting those needs, and because the statute did not address the facilities problems of the districts.

The Court determined that it should formulate a remedy for the Abbott districts' circumstances. While recognizing that increased funding for regular education in the Abbott districts was not sufficient to remedy the educational deficiencies in those districts, it mandated, as an interim remedy, that the state provide parity funding for all Abbott districts for the 1997-1998 school year. The Court also directed that administrative controls accompany this increased funding to ensure that the money is spent effectively and efficiently.

The Court then remanded the case to the Superior Court, Chancery Division, for a determination of what supplemental programs and improvements to facilities were needed in Abbott districts. The Court authorized the Superior Court to direct the Commissioner to initiate a study and prepare a report with specific findings and recommendations covering the Abbott districts that must be addressed to ensure a thorough and efficient education for the students in these districts. In addition, the Supreme Court directed the Commissioner to determine what actions would be required

to address educational capital and facility needs. Finally, the Court authorized the Superior Court to appoint a Special Master to assist in the proceeding.

Judge Michael Patrick King, a presiding judge of the Appellate Division, was temporarily assigned to the Chancery Division to conduct the remand proceedings. Judge King designated Dr. Allan Odden, a professor at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, as Special Master. He then ordered both sides to submit reports and recommendations concerning supplemental programs, facilities needs, and implementation.

On January 22, 1998, Judge King issued his report and recommendations. Pertinent to this presentation, Judge King adopted the Commissioner's proposal for Whole School Reform (WSR). In May 1998, the Supreme Court also adopted the Commissioner's proposal for WSR as an approach that can enable students in the Abbott school districts to achieve the CCCS (*Abbott v. Burke* 153 N.J. 480). This decision, when implemented in the 28 Abbott districts, will affect 268,000 children, representing 21percent of New Jersey's school population. In July 1999, Plainfield and Neptune were added through legislation to bring the total number of Abbott districts to 30.

## **B. DESCRIPTION OF WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM (WSR) IN NEW JERSEY**

Whole School Reform is a complete restructuring of an entire school, putting in place a series of programs and strategies that have been proven by research to be effective. To succeed, this restructuring requires the support and participation of those who must carry it out and are affected by it. Therefore, the decision to implement WSR and select a model must be made by the principal and faculty of the school. A committee of the stakeholders -- principal, faculty, support staff, parents and community members -- then oversees implementation.

The WSR initiative, a "top-down" and "bottom-up" reform strategy, is systemic in nature, unlike previous generations of reforms that were incremental and piecemeal. Current WSR programs systemically address curriculum standards, assessment, teacher professional development, governance, and family and student support, and integrates them with a common set of policies and priorities aimed at improved student achievement at the local school level. The specific WSR models identified for use by the Abbott districts were selected because of their success with populations similar to those in the Abbott districts.

## **C. CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS (CCCS) AND WSR**

The state education system consists of approximately 600 independent school districts that exert considerable local control. Confronting the state, therefore, is the issue of how to ensure that all children receive a "thorough and efficient" education while each district determines its own curriculum. New Jersey's current educational reform agenda is focused on ensuring that all students attain high standards for learning as delineated in the New Jersey Department of Education's 1996 Core Curriculum Content Standards. The CCCS define the concept of "thorough and efficient" as the state constitutional

guarantee that students are to be educated within a thorough and efficient system of free public schools. The CCCS describe what all students should know and be able to do upon completion of a thirteen-year public education, K-12.

The *Urban Education Reform in the Abbott Districts* regulations require that the Chief School Administrator of each district ensure that all WSR models and all whole school alternative program designs adopted in the district are aligned with the CCCS. The CCCS are divided into seven separate academic areas:

- Visual and Performing Arts;
- Comprehensive Health and Physical Education;
- Language Arts/Literacy;
- Mathematics;
- Science;
- Social Studies; and
- World Languages.

The CCCS also encompass five cross-content workplace readiness standards:

1. All students will develop career planning and workplace readiness skills.
2. All students will use technology, information, and other tools.
3. All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.
4. All students will demonstrate self-management skills.
5. All students will apply safety principles.

The CCCS are the standards all students are expected to attain. They set a measure of the knowledge and skills that all New Jersey children must have to step forward into the twenty-first century and be successful in their careers and lives. In order to determine how well students are achieving the CCCS, the NJDOE has developed three comprehensive statewide assessments: the grade-four Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA), the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) and the grade-eleven High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). These assessments will help districts determine the effectiveness of their reform efforts and the additional steps needed to ensure that students in the Abbott districts are achieving the high standards at the heart of a “thorough and efficient” education. The CCCS present a vision of high-quality public education for all children in New Jersey. The remaining sections of this guide flow from the mandate of the Abbott decisions and the CCCS.